

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 074702

FOL REPEAT JIDDA 2311 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI ALGIERS
AMMAN BEIRUT BONN BRUSSELS CAIRO DAMASCUS DOHA KUWAIT LONDON
MANAMA MUSCAT PARIS RABAT ROME TEHRAN TEL AVIV TUNIS AND CINCEUR
FOR POLAD MARCH 31, 1975

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2311

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA

SUBJ: NEW MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAUD AL FAISAL
AND SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY

REF : JIDDA 2245

1. SUMMARY: THE APPOINTMENT OF THE LATE KING FAISAL'S
INTELLIGENT AND WELL EDUCATED SON SAUD AS MINISTER OF
STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHOULD BRING SOME MARGINAL
IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDUCT OF SAUDI FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SOME BENEFIT TO THE U.S. AT A MINIMUM WE SHOULD HAVE
BETTER ROUTINE ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKING LEVELS OF THE SAG;
SAUD IS AN INSIDER AND NOW A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF
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MINISTERS WHICH ACTING MINSTATE MAS'UD WAS NOT. IT IS NOT

YET CLEAR WHAT AUTHORITY SAUD WILL HAVE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE HAS APPEARED INDOLENT AS DEPUTY PETROLEUM MINISTER BUT THIS MAY HAVE RESULTED FROM HIS SUBORDINATION TO THE DYNAMIC YAMANI. HE HAS THE PERSONAL POTENTIAL TO BREATHE SOME LIFE INTO A TALENTED BUT BADLY LED FOREIGN MINISTRY AND STRENGTHEN SAUDI ARABIA'S ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. END SUMMARY.

2. BY ROYAL DECREE ON MARCH 29, 1975, PRINCE SAUD AL FAISAL BIN ABD AL AZIZ, SON OF THE LATE KING FAISAL AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF PETROLEUM WAS NAMED MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. (REFTEL) THIS CORRESPONDS TO THE POSITION HELD BY OMAR SAQQAF AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH. SAUDI IS NOT AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY BUT AT THIS TIME WE CAN ONLY CONJECTURE AS TO THE EFFECT OF HIS APPOINTMENT ON THE CONDUCT OF SAUDI FOREIGN RELATIONS; MORE DEFINITE PROGNOSIS MUST WAIT UNTIL WE CAN DETERMINE WHETHER CROWN PRINCE FAHD WILL IN FACT BE THE EFFECTIVE PRIME MINISTER IN ALL AREAS AND UNTIL WE HAVE A BETTER PRECEPTION OF THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAUD AND HIS UNCLE FAHD. (WE UNDERSTAND IT IS NOW GOOD BUT IT HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN SO.)

3. SAUD, 34 YEARS OLD, IS INTELLIGENT, WELL EDUCATED (PRINCETON '65), CAPABLE, SELF CONFIDENT, AND VERY CHARMING WHEN HE WANTS TO BE. AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF PETROLEUM, HE WAS ALSO INDOLENT. HE SPENT TWO MONTHS LIVING IN THE DESERT THIS WINTER. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY THREE WEEKS ON THE JOB AND THEN HIS ANNUAL MONTH'S SKIING VACATION. THIS MIGHT, HOWEVER, NOT BE A PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC; IT COULD BE A REFLECTION OF FRUSTRATION AT WORKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE VERY CAPABLE, VERY WELL KNOWN AND EXTREMELY ENERGETIC ZAKI YAMANI. SAUDI'S FORMAL EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS SOMEWHAT LIMITED BUT HE HAS REPRESENTED THE KINGDOM AT A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES. HE ALSO KNOWS OIL WHICH IN THE CASE OF SAUDI ARABIA MEANS A GOOD PART OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY.

4. SAUD IS "PRO-WESTERN" AND "PRO-AMERICAN" TO THE EXTENT THOSE TERMS HAVE MUCH MEANING HERE; HE UNDERSTANDS EUROPE
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AND THE U.S. AND SEES SAUDI ARABIA'S INTERESTS SERVED BY CONTINUATION OF ITS TRADITIONAL TIES WITH THEM.

5. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IS THAT THERE WILL BE SOME BENEFIT TO THE U.S. IN THE CONDUCT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, AT LEAST IN THE MOST BASIC AND PRACTICAL SENSE. AT A MINIMUM WE CAN EXPECT TO HAVE FAIRLY READY ACCESS TO A MINISTER OF STATE WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF

MINISTERS--WHICH THE ACTING MINISTER, MAS'UD, WAS NOT. WE ASSUME THAT MAS'UD WILL PROBABLY RETURN FOR A TIME AT LEAST TO RUNNING THE DAY-TO-DAY AFFAIRS OF THE MINISTRY--SOMETHING HE DID WELL ENOUGH THOUGH HIS PASSION FOR INVOLVING HIMSELF IN DETAIL HAS TENDED TO STIFLE ANY RARE INITIATIVE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. (IN FAIRNESS TO MAS'UD, HE HAS BEEN A RELIABLE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION. BUT HE IS NOT IMAGINATIVE OR CAPABLE OF TAKING AN INITIATIVE. HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WILLING TO ARGUE A POINT OF VIEW WITH HIS SUPERIORS WHICH HE DID NOT THINK WOULD BE WELCOME, EVEN WERE HE PERSUADED OF THE CORRECTNESS OF THAT POLICY.)

6. SAUD HAS THE PERSONAL POTENTIAL TO MAKE MUCH MORE THAN A MARGINAL POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE CONDUCT OF SAUDI FOREIGN RELATIONS. HE HAS THE BREATH AND IMAGINATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO NEW POLICY INITIATIVES (THOUGH HE IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO TAKE INITIATIVES IN AREAS OF TRADITIONALLY GREATEST SAUDI INTEREST--INTER-PENINSULAR RELATIONS, THE GULF, AND ARAB AFFAIRS IN GENERAL.) COMING FROM THE RELATIVELY EFFICIENT PETROLEUM MINISTRY HE MAY BE INCLINED TO SHAKE UP A FOREIGN MINISTRY WHICH ONCE PRIDED ITSELF AS BEING THE MOST PROGRESSIVE OF ALL THE MINISTRIES BUT--THOUGH STILL DRAWING GOOD TALENT--HAS BECOME AMONG THE MOST WHEEZING AND ARTHRITIC. WORKING LEVEL FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HIS APPOINTMENT. IF NOTHING ELSE, THE HANDSOME AND PERSONABLE SAUD WILL ADD A NEW GLOSS OF GLAMOR TO SAUDI FOREIGN RELATIONS. AKINS

UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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